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SUBJECT: BURUNDI'S CIVIL SOCIETY PUTS PRESSURE ON
NKURUNZIZA TO PAY ATTENTION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a meeting with the Ambassador on August 13, civil society leaders Onesphore Nduwayo of Government Action Watch (OAG) and Jean-Marie Vianney Kavumbagu of Ligue Iteka expressed serious concerns over President Pierre Nkurunziza's lack of action to address the political storm facing Burundi. Nduwayo and Kavumbagu urged Nkurunziza and his ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party to promote peaceful dialogue and to discontinue parlance that hinted at future violence. The civil society leaders condemned the recent publication of photographs in the CNDD-FDD party newspaper meant to disparage opposition members and portray them as public targets of future violence. Nduwayo and Kavumbagu also expressed concern over the increased criminality that is sweeping through Bujumbura and the surrounding areas, contributing to the fears of insecurity felt by the public. Kavumbagu and Nduwayo pondered whether Nkurunziza has the ability to focus on the important decisions of state and offered the possibility that Nkurunziza was being directed by others within his party. In conclusion, the spokespersons for OAG and Ligue Iteka recommended that Nkurunziza take the initiative to call all political factions to the negotiating table for good faith dialogue. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The leader of the civil society group OAG, Nduwayo, opined that Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza has reasons to worry and is not fully cognizant of the political situation in Burundi, portraying the situation as 'grave'. Nduwayo asserts that the majority of the National Assembly is opposed to Nkurunziza (Comment: A questionable assertion. End Comment), which was reflected in the President's speech in Rutana where he characterized certain assembly members as 'rebels'. Nduwayo claimed that Nkurunziza's ruling CNDD-FDD party was deeply divided with some party members feigning loyalty to Nkurunziza. Nduwayo also questioned the lack of response from Nkurunziza when the President of the Senate, Gervais Rufyikiri, sent a letter to Nkurunziza asking him to explain the constitutionality of his newly formed government. Lastly, Nduwayo pointed to the large gap in cooperation between the government and their main opposition parties, the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) and Union for National Progress (UPRONA).

¶3. (SBU) OAG leader, Nduwayo, questioned whether President Nkurunziza is indeed able to focus on making decisions. Nduwayo surmised that Nkurunziza has trouble analysing situations and wondered aloud if there were indeed others who were directing Nkurunziza in the affairs of state. In particular, Nduwayo pointed to the stalled talks with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL. Nduwayo asserts that there is an immediate

need to move forward with the peace process initiated by the September 2006 ceasefire agreement. He claims that some of Burundi's people have an increasing dread of insecurity due to the PALIPEHUTU-FNL unanswered question and others are taking advantage of the confusion with PALIPEHUTU-FNL with increased criminality. Nduwayo stressed that Nkurunziza should also focus on the management and prosecution of the scandals plaguing the country. Nduwayo suggested that 'cover-ups' were common to protect powerful people of the same political philosophies. The OAG leader emphasized that the population can not afford to pay for the errors and malfeasance of their superiors. As a human rights advocate, Kavumbagu worries too about the criminality in and around the government. Although cases of crime, even as minor as armed robbery, are reported daily, Nduwayo laments that no one ever seems to be caught. Kavumbagu suggests that while the political elite maneuver and struggle for power, the vacuum in the management of internal affairs is being filled with crime.

14. (SBU) In addition to the thoughts expressed by Nduwayo, Ligue Iteka representative, Kavumbagu, lamented that there seemed to be no end to the deadlock between Nkurunziza's government and the opposition parties, exacerbated by the recent formation of the new cabinet minus the active participation of FRODEBU and UPRONA. Kavumbagu cited the multiple cases of corruption rampant in the nation and suggested that Nkurunziza feared impeachment by the opposition for his possible involvement in various controversial scandals, such as Interpetrol and the sale of the presidential jet. Kavumbagu suggests that two major camps have formed within the political spectrum: an opposition group bent on the impeachment of Nkurunziza, including those CNDD-FDD party members loyal to former party leader Hussein Radjabu; and those who advocate support of the

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President by advising him to make competent decisions and appointees, to respect the political process and constitution.

15. (SBU) Kavumbagu expressed concern over the ambiguous and dangerous communication strategies being utilized by Nkurunziza recently. Kavumbagu said that Nkurunziza is more frequently using 'warring' language and claims that Nkurunziza mentions a risk of future warfare in his speeches without being specific. With regard to the recent publication of names, photos and family information in the CNDD-FDD party newspaper of opposition members, Kavumbagu asked rhetorically if this is Nkurunziza's way of creating targets for the ire of the public. Kavumbagu stressed that Nkurunziza be more clear in his language and his intent. OAG spokesperson, Nduwayo, reiterated Kavumbagu's comments about the newspaper publication incident and added that Nkurunziza needs to begin to use more peaceful language because there are still thousands of weapons in the hands of ordinary citizens.

16. (SBU) In response to queries about a way forward, both of the civil society leaders called for Nkurunziza to engage in clear dialogue. The two leaders stressed that the President must be politically realistic and engage in the dialogue with goodwill and in good faith. Without dialogue, they said, all of the major political opposition will adopt the hardline against the government. Nduwayo and Kavumbagu also hoped that Nkurunziza would be able to rise above the demands of those military advisors who are dictating their will and wishes upon the president. As to the opposition factions, the spokespersons asserted that the minority parties will be responsible for what happens to the nation in the future and urged them to resist being guided by personal interests. Nduwayo and Kavumbagu demanded that the minority voices respond positively if asked for dialogue. Lastly, the two civil society leaders asked the international community to exert its pressure on all factions to come to the negotiating table. When asked if civil society, in turn, can assert its influence in the political landscape, Nduwayo and

Kavumbagu reassured the group that pressure can be applied, but its effect is limited, and they risked losing credibility if the influence is not used judiciously.

17. (SBU) Comment: Contrary to any of the previous discussions with government officials and opposition leaders, Nduwayo and Kavumbagu presented perspectives that truly have the nation and its people as the focus. Without absolving the major opposition parties of their responsibility to help pull Burundi out of this political and economic malaise, civil society is putting the burden for reconciliation and progress in the lap of Nkurunziza and his government. Although civil society views its influence on Nkurunziza and the political parties as limited, and as objective and astute observers on the periphery of the political landscape able to interpret the varied political messages, the people of Burundi can not afford these voices to remain silent. End Comment.
MOLLER